

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A technique to load balance network packet traffic using content switching is provided. Packets are routed to a particular server or otherwise processed based on the HTTP header content of the packets. In an embodiment, the HTTP header contents of the packets are used in such processing. Content switching decisions are based on any field in the HTTP header, including both known and unknown fields. A plurality of content switching policies is provided. A policy includes a set of rules and actions associated with these rules. Complex nested rules are defined. The evaluation of these nested rules is simplified by converting the nested rules in to their sum of products or minterm representations, and then a bit mask technique is used in conjunction with the minterm representations to determine which set of complex rules in a policy is valid and thus require the corresponding content switching action.

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